

INLS 200 Retrieving & Analyzing Information: Data to Story Project

PROJECT STEPS:

- 1) Explore, manipulate and carefully examine an existing structured data set, the General Social Survey, 2012* (see description on page 3), to find an interesting and relevant to a topic of interest to you and your group partners. During our workshop at the Odum Institute on **Thursday, Feb 6** we will look at a slice of the 2012 data; I have selected 147 variables (out of 5000+) that I hope you will find interesting (variable labels attached). You will explore different combinations to identify an interesting relationship among the variables. For example you might look at AGE and POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION or CAPPUN and RELIG (views on capital punishment and religious preference). There are lots of potential issues to examine – try several combinations and see what would make for an interesting story.

For this project you may choose 2-4 variables to compare. Since we are using only one survey we cannot do any trend analysis over time – just this particular snapshot of opinions in the United States in 2012.

During the workshop Dr. Cathy Zimmer will walk us through the use of the statistical software, SPSS, to learn how to examine and manipulate the survey data. We will focus primarily on descriptive statistics – look at averages, means, standard deviations, etc. The first workshop will be your introduction to the statistical software – and the second lab will be your opportunity to refine and polish your analysis with help from Dr. Zimmer.

- 2) Analyze the data to identify/uncover some interesting information, comparisons or findings; focus on only two or three variables and create a few charts/graphs that effectively communicate the interesting relationship between the variables. Examples from the GSS might involve particular demographic information and related social attitudes or experiences. Remember we cannot assume any causal relationship between variables – we're just looking for some interesting relationships.
- 3) Conduct a literature search on the topic to add relevant contextual information (research articles focusing on the topic – supporting and/or conflicting, historical perspectives on the topic, definitions and elaboration on the variables, explore how the topic is expressed in the media, etc.). This is your opportunity to take the topic in almost any direction...using the demographics and/or attitudes you identified in the data – build a story around it – an interesting one that will engage your colleagues.

Document your search strategies, parameters, processes and results (tell us where you looked for information, how you identified and evaluated information, and how you decided what information to include). You will want to focus on reputable sources – but

not all selected sources need be research studies. Consider specialized encyclopedias, CQ Researcher, newspaper articles, etc.

On **TBD** we will have a class workshop with additional librarians to help you refine your database search skills and point you to quality resources on your topic.

- 4) Craft an annotated bibliography in APA format describing the most relevant and authoritative literature (at least 5 different sources). Your group will turn this in along with the description of how you conducted your searches, how you evaluated the information and how you decided what items to include or exclude.
- 5) Create a presentation to describe to the class the initial survey data that you identified (use charts/graphs here) and “tell the story” you built with the contextual information you found. Each group will design a PechaKucha (presentation format that is based on a simple idea: 20 slides x 20 seconds) and **deliver in-class on April 15, 17 or 22**. We’ll discuss details in class.

DELIVERABLES:

1. **Project outline and description** of the topic your group will focus on for the project. The topic should stem directly from the General Social Survey dataset that we are examining. Select 2-4 variables that provide an interesting relationship and on which you can develop a story. As a group craft 1-2 clear and focused paragraphs describing your intended project. Be sure to include the selected variables, findings from GSS data (correlations, charts/graphs) and your plan for information search to support the story.
Due Tues March 4.
2. **Log and analyze your literature search** – walk me through your information searching processes. What pathways did you follow? What databases and resources did you consult? What search strategies did you use? What subject headings and keywords did you try? What worked well in your process – and what did not work well? How did you divide up the project? What areas was each team member responsible for? The information search documentation and analysis should be compiled into one sequential document for the group.
Due Thur April 3.
3. **Annotated bibliography in APA format** describing the resources you selected to create and support the “story”. As a group determine which resources best support your “story” and come to an agreement about which information sources should be included or excluded. Identify each source in proper APA format. Each annotation (1-2 paragraphs) should explain what the resource contributes to the story in terms of contextual information and provide an evaluation of the quality/authority of the resource.
Due Tues April 15.

4. Tell your “story” through a PechaKucha presentation in class. As a team share with us the original topic you identified (use those charts/graphs from SPSS here) and the supporting contextual information you selected. Timing is important in this presentation format so you will need to write a script and rehearse to get it right and communicate effectively.

Presentation April 15, 17 or 22

[Small groups to be assigned; concept approval by instructor]

*The General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by that National Opinion Research Center, is widely regarded as the single best source of data on societal trends. Except for the U.S. Census, the GSS is the most frequently analyzed source of information in the social sciences. The GSS has been conducted since 1972 – at first every year and since 1994, every other year. We will be using the data collected in the 2012 survey. The survey is conducted as an interview (usually face-to-face interview) lasting about 1.5 hours with English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in non-institutional arrangements within the United States. The 2012 GSS provides data from 4510 respondents.

The GSS contains a standard 'core' of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal questions, plus topics of special interest. Many of the core questions have remained unchanged since 1972 to facilitate time-trend studies as well as replication of earlier findings. The GSS takes the pulse of America, and is a unique and valuable resource. It has tracked the opinions of Americans over the last four decades.

Read more about the GSS and access the data at: <http://www3.norc.unc.edu/GSS+Website/>

**The Odum Institute computer lab is open and available to you as a UNC student. You are welcome to use the statistical software, SPSS, there anytime. Lab assistants are available for help.

Regular Lab Hours

Odum Institute Primary Laboratory, Davis Library, Room 295

Monday - Friday: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Lab assistant available for consultation during open lab

<http://www.irss.unc.edu/odum/contentSubpage.jsp?nodeid=29>